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A clandestine requirements officer reveals to the intelligence analyst a magic formula to summon and command the powerful ginni of last resort.

SPY AT YOUR SERVICE, SIR

Lowell M. Dunleigh

"The obtaining of intelligence by covert means is an inefficient, expensive and unsatisfactory business. No secret intelligence is worth collecting unless it is absolutely certain that the intelligence is genuinely and urgently required by some executive authority. . . . The art of being an executive in a secret service (and it is an art, not a science) consists largely of seeing that the operating case officer knows exactly what intelligence he is required to obtain, or what target he has to attack. . . . The further the best brains of a secret service divorce themselves from this basic problem, the less efficient the service will be."

So writes a distinguished British colleague, crystallizing these nuggets of wisdom from his wide experience and the long traditions of his service. It is the duty of headquarters, he adds, "to see that the customers don't ask the field damn fool questions." To this negative thumbs-down on foolish questions we would add an outstretched palm begging for good ones, questions calculated to produce the highest yield of essential information.[1]

Putting the right questions to the covert collector in order to get the right answers is not simply a matter of professional neatness, it is imperative to the performance of the intelligence function. Clandestine assets for the collection of information are limited, and in the progressive complexities of the modern world we must be sure we are aiming them at the pivotal factors of power. On the other hand, the flooding of

[1] See William P. Bundy, "The Guiding of Intelligence Collection," *Studies in Intelligence* III 1 (Winter 1959), p. 49, for a review of guidance problems in clandestine collection as presented to the [redacted] Research Methods Conference.

the information channels is already acute and may soon become overwhelming. Every day more than 1,000 classified documents are poured into the intelligence stream. How many are brightly illuminating, how many of low candlepower? That depends not entirely on the validity of their information, but on what questions they answer.

Process and Rapport

From the viewpoint of the collector, the whole intelligence process has four phases, represented by quadruple R's—Research, Requirements, Reports, Reaction (or evaluation). The third phase is the collector's own, but is dependent on the other three, which belong to the analyst.

The analyst or producer must approach his analysis of the past or present and his estimate of the future through research—the assembling and collation of raw information. He usually finds that he needs more information than he has on some phases, or perhaps current coverage of a developing situation. So he levies a question on the collector, overt or covert. The question is answered by an information report. Then if the system is working properly, the analyst will react, evaluating the report to let the collector know whether he is on the beam. So the intelligence wheel turns: Research, Requirements, Reports, Reaction. Whether it turns smoothly or develops an eccentric wobble depends very considerably on the relation between analyst and collector. This relationship is the key to a pair of most critical and sobering problems—how to get the indispensable information, and conversely how to avoid choking the intelligence stream with the luxuriant water hyacinth of trivia.

In simpler days the operations of the quadruple R's could be combined in one man. In the fifth century B. C., Thucydides both reported and analyzed the Peloponnesian War, ranging the fields of politics, economics, military action, psychological and subversive warfare. He set down a creed that can be warmly embraced by modern practitioners of the intelligence arts and sciences:

And with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events

which I have described or else I heard of them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. Not that even so the truth was easy to discover: different eye-witnesses give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other or else from imperfect memories. . . . It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future. . . .

I do not think that one will be far wrong in accepting the conclusions I have reached from the evidence which I have put forward. It is better evidence than that of the poets, who exaggerate the importance of their themes, or of the prose chroniclers, who are less interested in telling the truth than in catching the attention of their public. . . . We may claim instead to have used only the plainest evidence and to have reached conclusions which are reasonably accurate.

Alas, no modern Thucydides is competent to undertake alone the full reportorial description and the analytic evaluation of the Cold War; they are a task for many men and many minds. And, perhaps unfortunately, the stylus and papyrus which limited even the prodigious industry of the phenomenal Greek have been replaced by a boundless proliferation of paper and the ever faster writing machines of today. But let us waste no time in tears for the past, for we cannot become our own ancestors; we have no choice but to seek some contemporary means of elevating the quality and reducing the quantity of information which now pours into the intelligence hopper.

I believe the way lies in a closer integration of the question and answer process, a better understanding between producer and collector as to their functions and mutual responsibilities, a realization that they are parts of the same body, lobes of the brain of a master institutional Thucydides. To the superficial observer there is no problem here. Machinery exists, and generally it is good machinery. With minor adjustments it would win a good rating from management experts. The river of paper, properly diked and leveed, flows smoothly from port to ordained port. There is a procedure to

fit every need, a good bureaucratic procedure. Everyone does what he should do according to the book. But what is often lacking, and this is the crucial point, is an empathy, an understanding appreciation, between analyst and reporter.

The collector has many obligations indeed to the harried analyst/producer, and many faults to account for and to remedy; these we shall discuss another time if we are invited back to these pages. At present our concern is with the analyst's obligation to the reporter, if action in his own interests should be called an obligation. It is really only the sensible use of his opportunity to ask questions and criticize the answers. This process can give him an overwhelming influence on the collection course, can make him an effective navigator of the overseas flight piloted by the collector. The navigator is obliged to indicate the route, the pilot is obliged to pursue it. The failure to exercise these roles with mutual helpfulness can cause a bumpy ride or even ditch the craft.

The British colleague we quoted spoke of the expense of clandestine collection. If the checks and balances of capitalistic enterprise only prevailed in intelligence, and the producer were charged for his raw material on the basis of cost and rarity, he would make sure his requests concerned only real and imperative needs. His parsimony with orders and his generosity with complaints about quality would ensure the most efficient use of the precious assets of clandestine collection. By its nature, however, a bureaucracy is akin to socialism or state capitalism, a system which can achieve efficiency only through an *esprit de corps*, an *élan vital* springing from the zeal and drive of personal responsibility. Without these, means will be mistaken for ends, shadow for substance, movement for achievement, and worst of all the size of the highway vehicle for the value of its cargo.

The Rolling Stock

Let's look at some of the vehicles on this highway between questioner and reporter—paved, like a more famous road, with most laudable intent—and weigh those that carry guidance to collectors.

Priority National Intelligence Objectives. These plot the cardinal points of the intelligence compass, the North, East, South and West for research, production and collection of all

types, overt and covert. They list, in order of priority, the areas of danger to national security. Here are the grand, heroic questions which must be answered for policy-makers. From an indifferent beginning nine years ago, they have become increasingly valuable with each revision. The latest edition, with its functional appendices, is an excellent document. Most heartening is this serious attempt to bring the great galaxies of the intelligence firmament into telescopic focus, though they are perforce beyond our quick and easy reach.

Interagency Clandestine Collection Priorities Lists. Keyed to the PNIO's, these lists are tailored for the clandestine collector and formulated on a lower level of abstraction. In many cases they not only list specific requirements but even suggest targets, for instance an installation which might yield the required information. They are growing steadily better, and so are used increasingly for collection and planning. Unfortunately the IPC has confined itself almost wholly to the Denied Areas, in obeisance to the questionable notion that only the Sino-Soviet Bloc, particularly its military power, is a really worthy intelligence target. There's no denying the dangers of hot war or military blackmail, but the hazards and manifestations of the cold war are worldwide. The IPC would seem to be somewhat in conflict with Messrs. Allen Dulles and Nikita Khrushchev, who in a rare duet of agreement have pictured the main battle lines stretching across the field of economics, chiefly in the underdeveloped areas outside the Bloc.

Post Mortems of National Intelligence Estimates. These report information gaps revealed in the preparation of NIE's. Properly they should be translated into collection requirements by the contributors to the estimate in question, but this responsibility is too often overlooked.

Related Mission Directive. This basic instruction for the operation of a clandestine station includes a section devoted to informational objectives. The producers are invited to express their general requirements for integration in this section. The response varies in quality and specificity.

Periodic Requirements Lists. These are regional or country lists issued quarterly through cooperative effort of CIA's Office of Current Intelligence and the State Department. Although not tailored to clandestine collection, they are valu-

able guides for the covert operator. They are improving rapidly in comprehensiveness and general quality.

Clandestine Collection Requirements. These are the particular questions directed specifically to the clandestine collector. In present usage "requirement" covers almost any expression of need for field response, and these questions extend over the widest range. In concept, understanding, and formulation a requirement may be the joy or the despair of the collector. It may be one of those "damn fool questions" or on the other hand a carefully conceived, skillfully formulated requirement which will stimulate the enthusiastic ferreting instincts of the field operator.

Now it is possible, I believe, to indicate quite clearly what makes it foolish or a potent catalyst to action. If the analyst will only give heed to the following recipe for concoction of a secret love potion, he can bend the collector gently to his will. The analyst who knows this secret will be able to practice the most rewarding kind of one-upmanship on his ignorant or careless colleague whose appeals to the field reporter evoke indifferent responses, or none.

The Magic Formula

The ploy, like so many general formulae, is simple to state, but not so easy to *em*ploy. It is this:

Be sure 1) that the information requested does not already exist in the catacombs of an intelligence library, 2) that the information cannot be gathered overtly, or if a question has both overt and covert aspects, that the latter are spelled out, 3) that questions expensive to answer in money and manpower are really significant, 4) that the formulation contains background information to help the collector understand what he is doing, most particularly in scientific and technical subjects, 5) that the questions are not analytic conclusions in interrogative form but are directed at specific informational unknowns upon which the conclusions must be built, 6) that the requirements statement makes a serious effort to suggest targets and indicators (signs, portents and outcroppings that signal subsurface developments, present or future).

Each element of this formula illustrates a vice or virtue which is manifested every day in the requirements traffic. Let's examine these elements one by one.

Be Sure It's Not in the File. Resist the lure to write a field collection requirement until the repositories of information have been searched. This is the analyst's responsibility. The admonition is obvious, though often ignored, to the great and righteous annoyance of the collector. Recently a regional service unit asked about a transportation facility in a denied area. A cable alerted the clandestine station. Meanwhile a curious intelligence officer at headquarters, stirred by vague remembrance, found the information reposing in the files, quite where it belonged. And the shades of Dale Carnegie shivered a bit. Remember, a library search is cheaper than clandestine field collection, certainly in precious manpower if not in cash.

Don't Ask for What's in the Newspaper. Never ask the covert operator to collect overt information. You are cracking pecans with a piledriver if you see the field operator as an all-purpose collector and refuse to believe that he can't undertake such easy tasks as collecting publications, clipping the press, etc. One avid and able analyst begged a covert office for overt collection on his specialty because the overt collectors were busy entertaining important visitors from Washington!

The demands for this kind of thing are greatest in times of crisis, when analysts and policy-makers expect the covert operator to turn himself into a news association. His proper role on these occasions is to probe behind the news, using his covert sources to illuminate events by infra-red; and this role presents a wonderful opportunity for the analyst. Recently I phoned a crisis-stricken analyst, suggesting with apologies that he take just five minutes from his dizzy whirl to frame a few important questions whose answers would be helpful in his round of analyses, interpretations, briefing papers, etc. From past reporting he was familiar with the general capabilities of our sources. He produced three questions, of which one became obsolete in a few hours; but the others were answered next day, to his profit and delight. This is the proper use of an important intelligence tool.

The working analyst who through ignorance or eagerness wants everybody to collect and transmit everything is not the sole culprit. More elevated chiefs may be even worse offenders. They often generate the greatest confusions by

expecting and encouraging their particular collectors to range the spectrum of conditions and events. The result is wasteful competition, duplication, and superficial coverage. Policy-makers have even greater expectations. Anachronistically and conflictingly in this age of science, their naive faith in the collector as seer and soothsayer is a last refuge of the belief in magic.

Here we get into the problem of expecting from the covert collector not exactly overt information, but something more than raw, unevaluated information, some analysis or interpretation. Even the experienced analyst will sometimes be led astray by undue faith in the wisdom of field collection, in its on-the-spotness. In a recent upheaval abroad the covert operator tried to analyze and focus a puzzling development. His reasonable, informed, but too parochial interpretation was not so good as that of a Washington analyst. The collector was fitting news events into the framework of a locally expected trend. The Washington analyst, without personal involvement, had been considering material from all sources in a larger context.

The role of the collector as analyst or interpreter is highly controversial. But in no case can it properly be more than a secondary, contributing function, whether voluntary or by request. The clandestine collector, in particular, though often extremely well informed, is a methods specialist, not a subject specialist. His interpretations and estimates, while they can often be helpful thought-provokers, should be taken into consideration not as authoritative but as tentative contributions to the ever elusive truth. So the good analyst will not encourage the covert collector to act the pundit and write editorials (a bait to which many leap eagerly), but rather will ply him with questions to keep him busy as a reporter developing information. Sound information in the covert field is more precious than prophecy.

Be Sure It's Really Significant. Be sure the questions are inspired by necessity, not curiosity, and that their answers will yield important dividends. This should be a matter of design, not of chance. Resist the temptation to play it safe and cover everything, thus nullifying the whole effort to concentrate limited assets on targets of major importance.

In a recent exercise a group of economic analysts set down a list of industrial establishments on which they wanted information. Almost all were vulnerable to attack. But to get complete information on all of them would have required the total assets of the collectors, with nothing left over for other targets. It was discovered that the analysts didn't really need complete information; what they needed was to fill in certain significant gaps in the production picture. So amiable negotiations between representatives of the collector and the analysts produced, first, an arrangement of the targets in some order of priority, and second, specifics as to what quantity and kind of information was needed on each.

This kind of complex determination requires stern self-discipline by the analyst, as well as understanding by the collector. Many a concentrated specialist could easily use up all existing covert assets on the gaps in his own specialty. A good analyst is always ravenous and omnivorous, but quick and greedy satiety might well be followed by intestinal obstruction and future famine!

Be Sure to Give Background. The operator needs to understand what he is collecting, and why. One disconcerting phenomenon in a bureaucracy is the descent of instructions or requests down through the echelons, losing direction and momentum like the steel pellets of a pinball machine bobbling unpredictably down among its pins. Requirements should have the speed and sharpness of a dart, and the feather end is background information to steady the shaft toward its goal.

The ultimate collector may be an agent limited in understanding. Ideally, of course, the case officer should be able to fill him in and tailor the requirement to his limitations. But if the case officer gets only a list of questions or, worse still, a bare request for "information" on some topic, he cannot always illuminate the subject. The field collectors are not always blameless, to be sure: some are so concerned with the operation of their delicate covert mechanisms that they do not dig deeply enough into the substance of their collection.

Considerable progress is now being made on this count. IPC lists are including increasingly good background statements. Economic analysts are adding blood and sinew to

the bare bones of requirements. Exceptionally good in this respect was the recent Guided Missiles Task Force study, which not only reviewed past collection but described present gaps and pointed the path to future collection. It was a true *Vade mecum* for the case officer. Though mildly encyclopedic, its items could be split up and developed for specific purposes and individual agents. The physician, no matter how refined his specialty, must be well informed on the anatomy of the whole body.

Our British colleagues do these background studies (Green Line papers, they call them) exceedingly well. They take a puzzling subject important to future policy, analyze it, and indicate lines of inquiry. We have experimented with a similar but more elaborate procedure, selecting a target country, relating it to its environment, reviewing existing requirements, speculating on alternative developments, pointing out avenues and targets for collection, and searching for valid indicators. Producers may be asked to participate in this exercise when the technique is better developed and better insured against getting bogged down in endless coordination. Meanwhile the producer can contribute by providing as much background as he can with his collection requests.

The point is that there is an important type of analysis whose aim is not to weigh precisely all facts and arrive at agreed conclusions, but rather to appraise tentatively, to speculate on alternative developments and their import, so as to stimulate the collection activity which will make agreed conclusions possible. The purpose here, again, is to concentrate limited assets on significant lines in a large context.

Ask Collection Questions, Not Conclusions. Conclusions are reached by totaling all evidence from research and all types of collection. The bane of the clandestine collector is the analyst who thinks he has posed a keen requirement when he asks, "Will the government of Country X remain stable until the next election?" or in variant form requests "all evidence of the stability of the government of Country X." Who, the collector might ask, can determine better than the analyst what type of evidence shows that Country X is crumbling? He sits at the center of all information on X. He's an expert. Let him tell us what kind of evidence he wants, and we'll look for it.

Of course, it's not quite so clear-cut as that. The collector is no mere mechanic. He often has an intimate knowledge of his area, but his position and his myriad chores (and perhaps his temperament) do not usually permit him an analytical approach.

So the analyst must not put himself in the position of a judge passively awaiting a verdict. Rather he is an attorney or even a police official directing a difficult quest for evidence, deploying all his overt uniformed police and covert plainclothesmen. Success depends upon search of police records, research by laboratory technicians, and interchange of information between field and headquarters, as well as upon the skill and zeal of the detectives in applying headquarters' instructions.

Suggest Targets; Point Out Indicators. Although the collector will certainly have good ideas of his own, the analyst can turn his intensive knowledge to good advantage by the selection of targets for investigation and indicators that bear watching. He is like the trained petroleum geologist who by carefully studying the terrain can show the field crews where best to drill because he will recognize indicators in the terrestrial environment that signal the likelihood of oil.

A medical diagnostician will suspect from preliminary observation that the patient has one of several possible ailments. This preliminary diagnosis enables him to order specialized examinations and laboratory tests to develop new information which, upon evaluation, will confirm, narrow, or change his original views. He has thus selected a few significant targets and indicators for investigation. He does not send the patient to a clinic for all the tests in the book, with the instruction to "tell me what's wrong with him." The whole galaxy of tests would require endless time, and most would be useless. The intelligence producer is in effect an internist, concerned with diagnosis and prognosis, whose success depends on the care with which he guides the collection of data by specialist-technicians.

In medicine, too, indicators are commonly watched to signal deeper conditions—temperature, pulse and respiration, the condition of tongue, skin, or fingernails, for example. In intelligence, the simpler military indicators are common enough: clearing of the border zone as a portent of invasion,

cancellation of leaves, and a host of other early warning signs. Scientific and technical intelligence has developed many indicators in its field: "What color smoke issues from the chimney of the chemical plant?" "Is the nozzle of the tank car frosted?"

The determination of simple indicators for significant information is a promising field for expansion, and a worthy and profitable task for the analyst. It should be particularly rewarding in the boundless expanse of the social sciences—politics, economics, psychological and social reactions, etc. We stand here greatly in need of indicators and measuring devices which will reveal trends or show where to dig. In the question of a government's stability, for example, the analyst might point out vulnerabilities which the opposition could be expected to attack effectively.

The indicator approach should have fruitful application to the known Communist tactical pattern, in detecting the first hints of infiltration before it becomes manifest—in press and radio, in the army, among the police, in key ministries. For instance, an early move toward getting control of the press is to get control of newsprint. The target for this information might be a local business firm or a newsprint producer abroad.

Mutual Understanding and Responsibilities

If the analyst asks important, practical, and appropriate questions, if he tries to convey to the collector an appreciation of why they are important, and if he helps select high-yielding targets and indicators, he is likely to get good information: the collector for his part is obliged to use his classic formula and operate good agents against good targets. The mutuality of this responsibility is inescapable. Producer/analyst and collector/operator are tied together, for better or for worse.

In the bad good-old-days, particularly when the end of the war opened large new areas, the information-hungry analyst welcomed almost everything, and the operator collected with slim discrimination. In those honeymoon days of the analyst Owl and the spying Pussy-cat, they dined on mince and slices of quince and danced by the light of the moon. But as every marriage counselor warns, the honeymoon does not last forever. Ideally it merges into a workaday world of practical

partnership, exchanged tolerances, happy dialogue, and mutually accepted responsibilities. So we hope it will be with this couple; it would be too bad if their beautiful peagreen boat foundered on too many "damn fool questions."